

CHRISTIAN MONEY \$ENSE

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Make Sure You Understand What God Means

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A little boy was in a relative's wedding. Coming down the aisle, he would take two steps, stop, and turn to the crowd. While facing the crowd, he would put his hands up like claws and roar. So it went (step, step, ROAR, step, step, ROAR) all the way down the aisle. As you can imagine, the crowd was near tears from laughing so hard by the time he reached the pulpit. When asked what he was doing, the child sniffed and said, "I was being the Ring Bear."

Sometimes funny things can happen when we misunderstand an instruction. I would love to have attended the wedding described above! At other times, awful things can happen when we misunderstand an instruction. Let's take a look at a passage of Scripture that has a different rendering in the Greek (original language of the New Testament) than in many English Bibles.

James wrote to the early church in the book bearing his name. He reminded his readers that their faith in Christ must ultimately express itself in post-salvation works. In other words, live what you believe.

His readers were about to enter a time of fiery persecution (literally) under Rome. Their faith would be tested, and they would be asked to renounce the name of Christ. James was concerned about his readers. When persecuted, where would they draw encouragement and strength?

James addressed a concern in chapter 5, writing about material possessions being lost. He wrote of wealth rotting, moths eating clothes, and gold and silver corroding. Some English translations express these as past events. However, based upon the context and the verb forms, James was not speaking of the past, but the future.

A good translation of this verse could be, "Now listen, you rich people, weep mournfully because of the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches *will* rust and your garments *will become* moth-eaten, your gold and silver *will* rust and that rust *will* be a testimony against you and

will consume your flesh like fire. You have hoarded treasure in the last days" (5:2-3).

James warned his readers that even though riches seem real because we can touch them, trials would ultimately show that riches do not bring security. This message rings true for us as well. It is easy for us to put our trust in the abundance of our possessions. We can feel them. They seem very secure. Shouldn't we find our comfort in them?

James' readers experienced the same reality that we will realize one day: Riches do not bring security. If you misinterpret the passage, you might conclude it is a commentary about a past situation. In fact, this passage is a warning about the future. When severe trials come your way, in what will you be trusting? When you stand before the judgment seat of Christ, what will your stewardship reveal?

You can make changes this week to help you with your stewardship before God.

- Make a plan to increase your giving to your church this year. Start this Sunday.
- Make a plan for how you will spend and save money the rest of 2002.
- Most importantly, begin to change your view of finances. Look at them like God does and begin to please Him. The book of Proverbs has great wisdom on finances.

One day we will learn that James' warning is true for everyone. Make sure you understand what God is really saying. At the last day, what will your stewardship reveal?

BBC Foundation has been ministering to churches and individuals regarding biblical stewardship since 1992. Send your questions on finances and stewardship to: BBC Foundation, 538 Venard Rd., Clarks Summit, PA 18411. Phone: (800) 451-8668, website: bbcfoundation.org; e-mail: info@bbcfoundation.org